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ANNUAL REPORT

**MARYLAND STATE BOARD
OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS**



1920-1921

**OFFICES
211 NORTH CALVERT STREET
BALTIMORE, MD.**

ANNUAL REPORT

MARYLAND STATE BOARD

—OF—

MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

1920-1921

GEORGE HELLER
Chairman

CHARLES F. MACKLIN
Vice Chairman and Treasurer

MARIE WHITE PRESSTMAN
Secretary

MARGARET E. MULLIN
Clerk

OFFICES
211 N. CALVERT STREET
BALTIMORE, MD.



Baltimore, Md., December 1, 1921.

To His Excellency

Albert C. Ritchie,

Governor of Maryland.

We respectfully submit the report of the Maryland State Board of Censors, for the period October 1, 1920, to September 30, 1921.

The report shows a record of the meetings of the Board, and abstracts of the proceedings thereof, the actual workings and operations of the Board, and statements in detail of all receipts and disbursements by the Board, and report of all prosecutions and fines for infractions of the law.

The receipts of the Board show a substantial increase in the volume of work over the past two years. The work has been handled without any increase in the office force since July 1919, with the exception of the addition of one paid inspector. The receipts for the period of this report show an increase of 78 per cent over the amount collected in fees, fines, and from the sale of substitute seals, for the fiscal year of 1919. The Board has turned over to the State Treasury the sum of \$7,462 in excess of all appropriations received for its support during the year. The work of the Board has thus been no burden to the taxpayer; on the other hand, the motion picture industry, while supporting the activities of the Board by the payment of moderate fees, has benefited materially in all its legitimate branches, as shown in the rapid expansion both in numbers and size of theatres erected within the year, and the great increase, referred to above, in the number of films licensed for exhibition in the State.

The censorship of motion pictures, has, in the opinion of the Board, tended to establish more firmly the industry in this State by holding up a high standard of morals, and restoring confidence to the general public, despite the severe attacks directed by divers agencies at the film industry. The existence of the Board itself has kept the flood of salacious and pernicious films to a great extent out of the State, while such films of this character as have been submitted for examination to the Board have met with immediate rejection. The greater part of the work of the Board consists in revision and elimination of films which fail to measure up, in one respect or another, to the standards set.

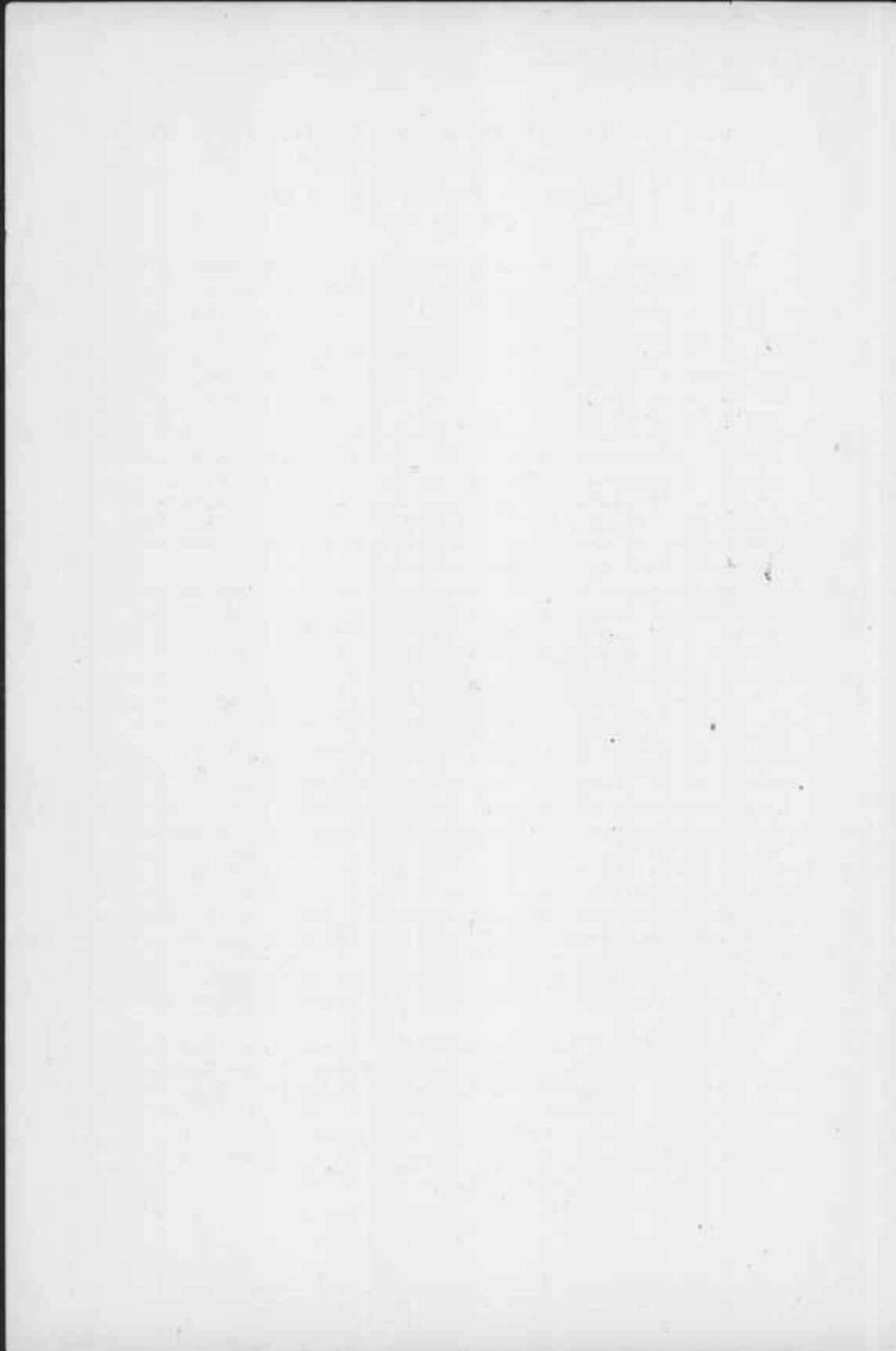
The Board herewith submits a report of all examinations, eliminations and rejections of films, together with a classified list of reasons for such disapproval.

Respectfully submitted,

GEO. HELLER, Chairman

C. F. MACKLIN, Vice Chairman and Treas.

MARIE WHITE PRESSTMAN, Secretary



REPORT OF OPERATIONS OF THE MARYLAND STATE
BOARD OF CENSORS IN COMPLIANCE WITH SEC.

9, ACT 1916, CH. 209, ACT 1918, CH. 809,
ACT 1920, CH. 651.

The members of the Board, meeting daily, have examined 5335 films during the past fiscal year. Original subjects to the number of 4028, comprising 10,881 reels, and 1307 duplicate films, comprising 2,906 reels, were submitted for censorship. All films, with the exception of duplicates, and, in some cases, reissues, were examined on the screen at least once. In the case of an appeal from any of the findings of the Board, the film was examined by two or more members of the Board and in the presence of the applicant when requested. The Board makes every effort to save the film whenever possible. Some films were examined as many as three or four times before a reconstruction which was satisfactory to the Board and the producers could be agreed upon. No appeals from the findings of the Board, in any case, were taken to the courts. The results of all examinations for the year show that 4086 subjects were approved, 57 rejected, and 1192 passed with eliminations..

A great increase in the number of duplicate prints and reissues submitted for censorship, as required by Sec. II of the law, has resulted directly from the various checks instituted by the office for the purpose of enforcing this provision of the Act, i. e., use of perforations, numbered seals, affidavits, etc.

Considerable difficulty has been experienced by the Board in keeping proper check on approval seals issued on censored prints. The seals, according to complaints by the exchanges, are frequently detached and lost in the course of distribution. Such constant demands for substitute seals were made, frequently in unreasonably large quantities at a time, that the Board adopted a new ruling, effective on December 6th, that all substitute seals must be applied for on form provided by Board, duly sworn to before a notary, and a fee of \$1.00 charged for each. In the case where the original perforation remains in film, no affidavit is required, but applicant may submit the print itself as evidence of censorship. This plan has worked with admirable success. Greater care has been taken by exchanges to see that seals are not unnecessarily mutilated and destroyed, and the perforated number in film is preserved as evidence of censorship. A total of \$1,280.00 was collected from the sale of substitute seals for the year.

The eliminating of parts disapproved by the Board has been done under the Board's direction by an agent appointed by the Washington exchanges to handle this business in Baltimore. A few exchanges make their own cuts. No permit is issued by the office until all eliminations ordered have been satisfactorily made. A careful check is kept on duplicate prints to see that cuts ordered are made in accordance with order on original print. Approximately one print in five must be cut.

STANDARDS

The Maryland Board of Censors has adopted no set rules and standards for censorship, being guided by the broad lines laid down by the law (Sec. 6, Act 1916, Chapter 209). The Board, however, has found it desirable to classify reasons for all rejections and eliminations ordered by the Board each year in order that the censors may be guided thereby, and the work made as consistent as possible.

Films are judged on their merits as a whole, with a view to the reaction on the average audience, bearing in mind always the effect on the adolescent and youthful mind. With regard to the latter, the Board endeavors to remove all scenes and references which might excite undue curiosity in relation to sex matters and crime, and where such scenes may not be rejected entirely, to render them unintelligible to the undeveloped mind.

It is impossible, however, to apply the same yardstick of standards to every film. The underlying principle of the story, the attitude of mind of the director as well as the theme and scenes presented must be considered. Art is not governed by rules. As elements of sex and crime are the basis of all literature, so the motion picture must necessarily depict the strife between good and evil. Sex themes handled with proper restraint are permissible, likewise films depicting punishment of crime.

The film which is fundamentally good, but in which has been inserted a scene offensive to good taste and morality, presents no difficult problem to the censors. But the film which is fundamentally bad, and which yet contains no scene offensive to the most observing, requires the keenest analysis and judgment. The producer is too apt to cloak his most vicious production in the guise of a "moral" or "problem" play.

Exceptions were taken for the following reasons:

Suggestive comedy, stories built on illicit love, over-passionate love scenes, attempted criminal assaults upon women, nakedness and indecent costumes, prostitution and interiors of disorderly houses, salacious titles and captions, inciting dancing, burning and branding of human beings, disrespect for the law and condonation of crime especially by officers of the law, deeds of violence (lighting and throwing bombs, arson, train wrecking, hold-ups, excessive gun play, etc.)

Men and women living together in adultery and without marriage, drinking and gambling scenes made attractive, sex themes treated without proper restraint, prolonged success of criminals, brutal handling of women and children, brutality to animals.

Use of opium and other habit forming drugs, bedroom and bathroom scenes of an equivocal character, malpractice, venereal disease inherited or acquired, scenes indicating that a criminal assault on a woman has been perpetrated, gruesome murders, actual stabbing and shooting of persons, profuse bleeding, dead bodies, harrowing death scenes, morbid presentations of insanity, executions and lynchings, burlesques of hanging.

Profanity in titles, maternity scenes and women in labor, materialization of the figure of Christ, impersonation of the Deity, stories and incidents showing disrespect for any religion, advocacy of the doctrine of free love, stories primarily concerned with the underworld, drugging and chlorforming victims for criminal purposes, inflammatory scenes and titles calculated to stir up racial hatred and antagonistic relations between labor and capital, exploitation of notorious characters.

INSPECTION

The Board is greatly indebted to the Women's Civic League for its co-operation in furnishing a paid inspector to work under the direction of the Board for the greater part of the year.

Paid inspection, instituted for the first time since the establishment of the Board in 1916, has shown immediate results in better enforcement of the law. The Board, according to provisions of the Budget, appointed one paid inspector on October 1, 1920. The work of this inspector has necessarily been confined to Baltimore City, and the Board has been obliged to rely on volunteers in the Counties. This method of volunteer inspection is not entirely satisfactory and a request for two additional inspectors at salaries of \$900 each has been placed in the Budget to be submitted, with the approval of the Governor, to the Legislature at its next session.

PROSECUTIONS

The Board has instituted prosecutions in thirty-one cases for infractions of the law during the year. Nine cases were dismissed, two released on costs, eighteen fined, and two released on writs of certiorari. A list of prosecutions, giving titles of films, theatres where offenses occurred, and amount of fines is attached. A total of \$520 was imposed in fines for the year.

POSTERS, BANNERS, AND ADVERTISING MATTER

While the purpose of those framing the law appears to have been that advertising matter relating to films should be under the control of the Board, the Act itself has not conferred this power on the Board.

During the year the Board has brought to the attention of various magistrates posters which, in the opinion of the Board, were immoral and improper, and unfit for exhibition. In one case the Magistrate saw fit to impose a fine of \$10.00 for the exhibition of an indecent poster.

The Board has further sought to control objectionable advertising matter used in connection with motion picture films by requiring the exchange manager, or his agent, to sign a written agreement not to use in connection with any film disapproved by the Board, such scenes as the Board had ordered cut from the film itself.

The Board has co-operated with the Advertising Club in the attempt to suppress all misleading and fraudulent advertising matter used in connection with films. The Board is greatly indebted to the Advertising Club for its efforts in this direction.

NEW LEGISLATION

The Board recommends that the provisions for the enforcement of the law be made adequate by providing the Board with the means of "follow-up" work. In addition to the two inspectors needed for this work throughout the State, powers of recall of permits and confiscation of film shown in violation of the law, should, in the opinion of the Board, be conferred on the Board.

While the film exchanges, for the most part, co-operate with the Board to the fullest extent, there is a tendency among some to take advantage of the small fines imposed, preferring to pay the fine to losing their investment altogether. Often this is accomplished without the knowledge of the exhibitor who receives the film with the approval seal of the Board attached. While such seal is not a bona fide seal of the Board, it is difficult for the exhibitor out of the city to ascertain this fact in time to protect himself against such frauds, and he must close his house as it is impossible for him to obtain another film on that day. The Board further recommends that a penalty be provided for making a false affidavit to the Board.

REORGANIZATION

The work of the Board of Censors is not directly related or co-ordinated with the work of any other department of the State. The functions of the Board are quasi-judicial. Continuity of policy is important from the standpoint of the interests concerned.

The Reorganization Committee in its proposed plan for reorganization of the administrative departments of the State Government has stated that it found no necessity for any recommendations with respect to the State Board of Censors. The present form of the Board, consisting of three members, appointed by the Governor, with overlapping terms of three years, has been approved in the report. The Board concurs in this judgment, likewise with the recommendation that one member at least, should continue to be a woman.

REPORT OF FILMS EXAMINED

October 1, 1920—September 30, 1921.

	Films Original	Films Duplicate	Original Reels	Reels Duplicate	Films Approved	Films Rejected	Films Eliminated
October ...	333	90	831	182	347		76
November .	316	79	851	168	315	8	72
December ..	312	100	930	286	303	13	96
January ...	431	115	1,167	260	406	6	134
February ..	343	115	1,018	261	330	2	126
March	393	117	999	234	384	1	125
April	360	130	1,019	319	322	3	165
May	348	129	959	279	366	4	107
June	324	115	916	262	352	7	80
July	240	90	564	176	271	5	54
August	303	105	796	193	330	5	73
September .	325	122	831	286	360	3	84
	4,028	1,307	10,881	2,906	4,086	*57	1,192

* 18 films finally rejected—39 passed in reconstructed form.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Films, Original	4,028		
Films, Duplicate	1,307		
Reels, Original		10,881	
Reels, Duplicate		2,906	
Films Approved			4,086
Films Rejected			57
Films Eliminated			1,192
	5,335	13,786	5,335

STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

For the period October 1, 1920 to September 30, 1921.

RECEIPTS.

Appropriation—State of Maryland.....	\$14,665.36
Fees—Original Reels (10,866).....	21,732.00
Fees—Duplicate Reels (2,913).....	2,913.00
Sale of Substitute Seals.....	1,280.00
Fines	390.00
Collection for Previous Year's Adjustments.....	11.00
Interest on Savings Account.....	153.33
Cash Over.....	9.00

Total Receipts	—————	\$41,153.69
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DISBURSEMENTS.

Salaries and Wages—Page 2.....	\$12,544.04
Rent	1,950.00
Light, Heat and Power.....	314 97
Telephone and Telegraph.....	187.38
Supplies and Repairs for Machines.....	283.23
Traveling Expenses.....	96.37
Film Seals.....	2,172.48
Premium on Bonds.....	15.00
Moving Expenses.....	706.92
Insurance	68.00
General Office Expenses, Stationery, Stamps, Etc....	686.87

Total Disbursements	—————	19,025.26
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Excess of Receipts.....		\$22,128.43
Balance on Hand October 1, 1920—In Bank.....	\$5,020.50	
In Office.....	13.84	

	—————	5,034.34
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	—————	\$27,162.77
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Accounted for as follows:

Remitted to State Treasurer.....	\$11,249.00
*Balance on Hand September 30, 1921.....	15,913.77

	—————	27,162.77
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*On Deposit in Bank—Charles F. Macklin Acct.	\$159.57
On Deposit in Bank—Savings Account.....	15,754.20

	—————	\$15,913.77
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Baltimore, Md., October 15, 1921.

Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors,
211 N. Calvert Street,
Baltimore, Maryland.

Gentlemen : Pursuant to your instructions, we report we have made an audit of the Cash Transactions for your Board for the period of October 1st, 1920 to September 30th, 1921, and have found same to be correct.

We submit attached hereto classified statement showing the Cash Receipts and Disbursements of your Board for the year, indicating a balance of Cash on hand as of September 30, 1921 of \$15,913.77, which amount has been confirmed and verified by us.

Respectfully submitted

WILLIAM A. GILLESPIE,
State Auditor.

RECORDS OF PROSECUTIONS FOR YEAR 1920-1921

DATE	TITLE OF FILM	WHERE EXHIBITED	NATURE OF OFFENSE	IMPOSED FINE
October 9, 1920	Old Wives for New	Grand Theatre, Baltimore..	Not Making Eliminations	\$ 50.00
October 13, 1920	His Wedding Day.....	Solax, Baltimore	No Seal.....	5.00
December 6, 1920	Sister to Salome.....	Fayette, Baltimore	Uncensored Film	25.00
December 6, 1920	Sister to Salome.....	Fayette, Baltimore	Using Seal Unauthorized.	50.00
December 6, 1920	Unchastened Woman	Waverly, Baltimore	Not Making Eliminations	25.00
January 11, 1921	Right to Love.....	Pictorial, Baltimore	Not Making Eliminations	25.00
January 17, 1921	Queens Up	Frederick Avenue, Baltimore	Using Seal Unauthorized.	50.00
February 1, 1921	Hall Room Boys.....	Solax, Baltimore	No Seal.....	5.00
February 1, 1921	Should a Wife Come Back	Solax, Baltimore	No Seal.....	Released on Costs Dismissed on writ
February 1, 1921	The Dark Road.....	Leader, Baltimore	Not Making Eliminations	Certiorari
March 10, 1921	Trumpet Island	Realart, Baltimore	Immoral Poster.....	10.00
April 13, 1921	Dice of Destiny.....	Hippodrome, Baltimore	Not Making Eliminations	25.00
April 28, 1921	Double Adventure	Fairmount, Baltimore	Failure to Display Seal...	10.00
May 1, 1921	Playmates	Picture Garden, Baltimore..	Failure to Display Seal...	5.00
June 23, 1921	Fatal Fortune	Arcadia, Baltimore	No Seal.....	5.00
July 12, 1921	Turn in the Road.....	Popular, Baltimore	No Seal.....	5.00
July 26, 1921	Mother, I Need You.....	Picture Garden, Baltimore..	Using Unauthorized Seal, Uncensored Film.....	225.00
				<u>\$520.00</u>